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I am Dr. Amy Lamm and I am a small animal veterinarian in Billings, I have worked with animal shelters, breeders, rescue groups and disaster responders over the past 20 years in Montana. I've been involved in the large scale seizure of animals in shelters and breeding facilities. Most recently the Baker animal shelter closure, and the Kapsa case in Yellowstone county. HB 390 would have provided early intervention in both of these cases, perhaps saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in their respective counties. as well as preventing the possible mistreatment of the animals in their care. We need the right to inspect Montanas' breeding facilities and shelters BEFORE they are out of control, and help them follow guidelines for proper care. The existing laws do not address overcrowding, filthy conditions, or anything beyond the basics of food, water, minimal shelter and rabies vaccines. This is no longer enough. I have been frustrated numerous times regarding facilities I have personally visited, and have been told that a dog walking around in feces and urine, confined to a small crate, violates no law in Montana. Dogs are considered no different than a cow in a feedlot, for example. This is unacceptable to most people and especially to me.

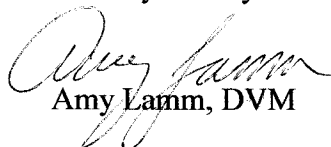
True hobby breeders will not be affected by this bill. When you sell more than 30 dogs a year and you are providing proper care, this is your job, not a hobby. Opponents of this bill feel the registration fee for inspection will be a hardship, but it is but a small fraction of their potential nontaxable income per year. We need HB390 to keep Montana from becoming the next best place to start a puppy mill.

I would expect reputable breeders and shelters to welcome inspections and guidelines. I would also expect they would proudly display their certificates of inspection, and pet owners would have a new way to determine if a facility is a good choice for purchasing their new dog. This is something we do not have at the present time.

As a taxpayer, I resent my tax dollars being used towards the seizure of animals from overcrowded horrible facilities. I would rather see that money spent to prevent the problem in the first place. As a veterinarian, it sickens me to witness these events with no laws to stop it until it is obviously a cruelty case. Early intervention, by inspections and establishing standards of care, is the logical way to prevent the mistreatment of animals and curtail the next headline producing case, with its enormous monetary burden.

HB 390 would be a smart financial move for Montana, as well as a giant leap for our canine companions.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this much needed and important bill.

  
Amy Lamm, DVM